

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 HEW-04 MED-02 PPT-01
CA-01 OC-06 CCO-00 COME-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-10
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P 151352Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6255
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL BUKAVU
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

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ALSO FOR AID/W: AA/AFR AND OFDA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SWEL, EAID, RW
SUBJECT: CHOLERA REACHES RWANDA, GOR APPEALS FOR HELP

SUMMARY: WORRIED THAT CHOLERA HAS SPREAD TO RWANDA (THERE WERE TWO CONFIRMED CHOLERA DEATHS LAST WEEK AT CYANGUGU), GOR HAS APPEALED FOR PHARMACEUTICALS AND EQUIPMENT. BELGIANS AND FRENCH WILL PROBABLY PROVIDE ENOUGH TO COVER TRAVEL NEEDS OF THEIR RESIDENT NATIONALS AND ARE CONSIDERING MORE. WE BELIEVE GOR REQUEST IS PRE-MATURE BUT WISH TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR HELPING IF SITUATION GROWS WORSE. END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING PAST WEEK, TWO CONFIRMED CHOLERA DEATHS HAVE OCCURRED IN RWANDA, BOTH IN CYANGUGU AREA (SOUTHWEST CORNER OF RWANDA, NEAR ZAIRE AND BURUNDI BORDERS). ONE OF VICTIMS IS BELIEVED TO HAVE CONTRACTED DISEASE DURING TRAVEL IN UVIRA REGION OF ZAIRE. OTHER CASES OF INFECTION HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN VICINITY OF CYANGUGU -- AND INDEED ARE RUMORED WIDELY AROUND RWANDA -- BUT NO OTHER DEATHS RELIABLY REPORTED.

2. GOR HAS CLOSED BORDERS AT CYANGUGU AND US IMPOSING VERY STRICT VACCINATION CONTROLS ON TRAVELERS ELSEWHERE. IT HAS ALSO LAUNCHED MAJOR INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN BY RADIO, IN KINYARWANDA, TO ENCOURAGE SPECIAL SANITARY PRECAUTIONS AMONG LOCAL POPULACE.

3. GOR HAS ALS ASKED EMERGENCY AID FROM BELGIUM, FRANCE, WEST GERMANY, AND U.S. UNDER COVER OF NOTE FROM MIN PUBLIC HEALTH, IT HAS APPEALED FOR LARGE QUANTITIES OF ANTI-CHOLERA VACCINE, TETRACYCLINE, FANASIL TABLETS, INTRAVENOUS SOLUTIONS AND NEEDLES, DISINFECTANTS, AND PLASTIC GLOVES. AMOUNTS REQUESTED (E.G. 500,000 TETRA-CYCLINE CAPSULES) APPEAR TO GO CONSIDERABLY BEYOND IMMEDIATELY FORESEEABLE REQUIREMENTS, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE VALUABLE IN EVENT INFECTION SPREADS.

4. AFTER RECEIVING GOR REQUESTS INDEPENDENTLY, FOUR AMBASSADORS MET JUNE 13 TO TRADE NOTES AND DISCUSS POSSIBLE RESPONSES.

--BELGIAN AMB INDICATED HE HAD ALREADY ASKED BRUSSELS TO AUGMENT REGULAR SHIPMENT OF MEDICINES AND SUPPLIES (WHICH GOB PROVIDES IN CONNECTION WITH ITS HOSPITAL/HEALTH PROGRAM HERE) TO INCLUDE EXTRA AMOUNTS VACCINE, TETRACYCLINE, AND FANASIL. HE ADDED PART OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS EXTRA AMOUNT WOULD BE RETAINED FOR USE AMONG LARGE BELGIAN COMMUNITY, MANY OF WHOM LEAVE RWANDA IN JUNE FOR SUMMER VACATIONS IN EUROPE AND WILL REQUIRE VACCINATION BEFORE DEPARTURE.

--FRENCH AMB SAID HE HAD ALREADY SUBMITTED LIST TO PARIS AND EXPECTED FAVORABLE RESPONSE, THROUGH FAR SHORT OF MAGNITUDE REQUESTED BY GOR. HE TOO HAS REQUESTED SPECIAL AIR SHIPMENT VACCINES FOR PRIVATE USE FRENCH EMBASSY AND COMMUNITY.

--FRG AMB TRANSMITTED REQUEST BUT WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION FOR FAVORABLE RESPONSE. PRIVATELY, HE TOLD US THAT HE BELIEVES ITEMS TO BE PROVIDED BY GOB SHOULD BE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TO MEET PRESENT NEEDS.

5. PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER MUSAFILI ASKED AMBASSADOR TO CONSULT WITH HIM JUNE 14 REGARDING GOR REQUEST. SAID HE ORIGINALLY HESITATED TO CALL UPON U.S. FOR HELP, INASMUCH AS WE HAD TURNED HIM DOWN FLATLY SOME MONTHS AGO ON SHOPPING LIST-TYPE REQUEST FOR GENERAL PURPOSE MEDICINES AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT. HOWEVER, OTHER GOR OFFICIALS INSISTED

WE BE APPROACHED AS WELL.

6. MUSAFILI OFFERED FOLLOWING DETAILS RE PRESENT SITUATION: CURRENTLY THERE ARE NO CONFIRMED CASES OF CHOLERA UNDER TREATMENT IN RWANDA. APART FROM TWO DEATHS, FOUR OTHER PRESUMED CASES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY TREATED. NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTY CLOSING FRONTIERS COMPLETELY, GOR EXPECTS PROBLEM TO GROW, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE ZAIRE HAS SO FAR TAKEN NO EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO PREVENT SPREAD. REGARDING SIZE OF GOR REQUEST, HE SAID GOVERNMENT INTENTION IS TO VACCINATE ALL HEALTH WORKERS, ALL ARMY PERSONNEL, AND ALL TRAVELERS DURING FIRST STAGE. CURATIVE ITEMS ON LIST ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE SIX-MONTH STOCK TO DEAL WITH CHOLERA SPREAD SHOULD THIS OCCUR.

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7. COMMENT: GOR ASSISTANCE LIST BEING SENT SEPTEL. FRANKLY THIS EMBASSY BELIEVES GOR REQUEST IS PREMATURE AND PERHAPS EXCESSIVE. UP TO NOW, SITUATION IS NOT RPT NOT ONE OF EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS, NOR DOES IT APPEAR THAT CHOLERA COULD BURST WIDESPREAD AROUND COUNTRY OVERNIGHT. IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS ARE (A) VACCINATION OF TRAVELERS LEAVING RWANDA FOR EUROPE AND (B) LOCAL MEASURES TO CONTAIN INFECTION IN CYANGUGU AND BORDER AREAS. IN OUR VIEW, RWANDANS HAVE TAKEN APPROPRIATE STEPS IN INITIATING PUBLICITY/INFO CAMPAIGN AND TIGHTENING BORDER CONTROLS; AND BELGIAN AND FRENCH EMBASSIES ARE MOVING EFFECTIVELY TO ASSURE VACCINATION FOR THEIR NATIONALS, WHO COMPRISE GREAT BULK OF SUMMER TRAVELERS.

8. ON OTHER HAND, WE WOULD NOT WISH TO EXCLUDE ASSISTANCE IN EVENT PROBLEM GROWS WORSE, PARTICULARLY AID OF A PREVENTIVE/SANITARY SORT AMONG DIRECTLY AFFECTED POPULACE. EVEN WITH MEDICINES AND EQUIPMENT NOW REQUESTED, GOR HAS VERY LIMITED CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT MASSIVE VACCINATION OR SANITATION CAMPAIGN; OUR HELP WOULD BE EXTREMELY VALUABLE IN SUCH EVENT. THEREFORE, WHILE NOT RECOMMENDING POSITIVE RESPONSE AT THIS TIME TO GOR REQUEST, WE PROPOSE TO INDICATE THAT WE ARE FOLLOWING SITUATION WITH SYMPATHY AND CONCERN AND ARE PREPARED TO ASSIST IF THERE IS AN APPROPRIATE ROLE FOR US TO PLAY.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE ADVISE WHAT ROLE U.S. HAS PLAYED IN OTHER REGIONS OF AFRICA AFFECTED BY CHOLERA, AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE AS TO WHAT ADVICE OR HELP WE MIGHT EVENTUALLY OFFER RWANDANS.

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